United Nations

Press Release

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General welcomes release of British hostage held by Islamic Jihad in Lebanon.

- Security Council unanimously votes to admit the two Koreas as Members of United Nations.

- Secretary-General of United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, to be held in Brazil next summer, calls for concrete commitments to improve environmentally destructive and economically unjust world.

- Special Committee on decolonization hears proposal for round-table discussions on future of East Timor to include staged peace process beginning with cease-fire and establishment of United Nations peace-keeping force.

- New Secretary-General of International Civil Aviation Organization appointed.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar this morning commented on the release of John McCarthy, a British hostage held in Lebanon by the Islamic Jihad, saying that he hoped an American hostage -- he did not know which one -- would be released today or tomorrow.

The Secretary-General told correspondents that he expected to receive this weekend a letter containing "a very important message" from the Islamic Jihad, which the British hostage was to hand over to him in person. He said that the important thing was that the release of the hostage had taken place with no conditions.

A couple of days ago, the Secretary-General sent his assistant for special assignments Giandomenico Picco, to Damascus to be a witness to the release of the hostages.

The Secretary-General is expected to go to Geneva tomorrow.

(more)

For information media—not an official record

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The Security Council today voted unanimously to admit the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea as Members of the United Nations.

Speaking to correspondents the Secretary-General said he was encouraged by the new memberships to the United Nations, which went towards the universalization of the Organization.

The applications by the two Koreas must also be approved by the General Assembly which is scheduled to take up the issue on the opening day of its forthcoming session, 17 September. Two South Pacific States, the Marshall Islands and Micronesia, have also applied for membership.

The Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea said, in a statement issued in connection with the Council's decision today, that his Government attached "great significance" to the fact that both Koreas had been admitted unanimously under a single resolution.

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The Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Maurice Strong, told a news conference in Geneva today that he did not expect the international Conference scheduled for next June, to be a cure-all for the planet's environmental ills. But the Conference must produce concrete commitments aimed at putting an environmentally destructive and economically unjust world on a new, sustainable and fairer path.

Mr. Strong stressed the importance of redeploying funds from arms spending and uneconomical subsidies to financing the development of and accessibility to environmentally friendly technologies and policies and said that it was essential for world leaders to understand that the consequences of not making changes would be far greater than the costs of making them.

The political will to provide the financing necessary for developing countries to incorporate an environmental dimension in their policies would be one of the greatest challenges facing the conference, he declared.

The Committee preparing for the conference resumes its work -- its third session -- in Geneva on Monday. Mr. Strong described that meeting as a "critical transition point in the preparatory process".

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A proposal for round-table discussions on the future of East Timor, which might include a staged peace process beginning with a cease-fire and the establishment of a United Nations peace-keeping force, was made yesterday in the Special Committee on decolonization.

(more)

The proposal was made by Merill Findlay, representative of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid. In a statement to the Committee, Mr. Findlay said a range of options for the future status of East Timor might be considered, from full independence to some form of "free association" between Indonesia and the Territory.

Petitioners who also addressed the meeting, stated that they deplored the alleged arbitrary arrest, detention, torture and execution of Timorese by the Indonesian military.

In a letter to the Acting Chairman of the Special Committee dated 6 August, the representative of Indonesia to the United Nations, Nana S. Sutresna, called any consideration of the question of East Timor "inappropriate". He said it would constitute unacceptable interference in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of a sovereign Member State. East Timor was occupied by Indonesian armed forces in 1975 and has been under Indonesian control since that time.

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The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), which is concerned with the safe and orderly growth of international civil aviation, has a new Secretary-General. Philippe H.P. Rochat of Switzerland assumed his duties on 1 August, succeeding S.S. Sidhu of India who had been in office since 1988.

Mr. Rochat has a doctorate in Law received at the University of Lausanne in Switzerland. He began his career as a journalist, specializing in international affairs, and has held various post in Swiss aviation.

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